

This story was in our May 2015 issue. We wanted to share it online with full color photos since our photos in the print version are black and white! And to include additional photos that were provided by Cynthia Eagleton and Maricruz Leyva of San Mateo Adult School.



David Doneff
of San Mateo Adult School
(Photo by Betty Malmgren)



“Wear Red for Adult Ed”

by Betty Malmgren

There were many people wearing red shirts at the winter conference of the California Council for Adult Education (CCAЕ) Bay Section held at the Berkeley Adult School. The message on the shirts was “Adult Education Matters.” The image on the shirt was of a **fi**st holding a pencil.

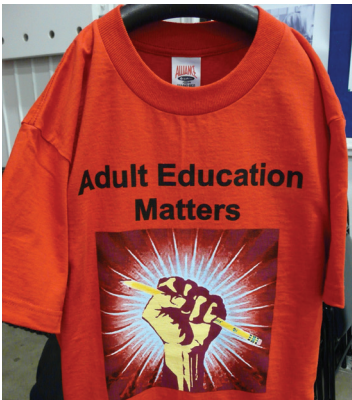
“Adult Education Matters” is a state-wide **grassroots** political advocacy campaign. It is to build awareness of the importance of adult education, said David Doneff of San Mateo Adult School who was selling the shirts at the conference. Teacher Cynthia Eagleton said that while it was started by the teachers’ union, the campaign at San Mateo Adult School is now in the **capable** hands of students. Students and teachers have visited Sacramento to talk to legislators and have invited legislators to visit the school. Similar efforts are being made around the state.

Maricruz Leyva, evening student council president (picture below left, in the center), and members of the San Mateo Adult School student council have been selling the shirts at school. They wear the shirts every Tuesday saying “wear red for adult ed.”

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Denis Palacios, Iris Ding, Maricruz Leyva, Jie Zhang, Baocheng Zhang, students at San Mateo Adult School, helped at a community clean-up effort.



Above, Red Tuesday at Torrance Adult School



Berkeley Mayor Tom Bates and California State Senator Loni Hancock spoke at the conference. They are pictured with Burr Guthrie, Berkeley Adult School principal, right. (Photo by Betty Malmgren)



Students at San Mateo Adult School

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The goal, Maricruz says, is to make the community aware of how important it is for adults to have the opportunity to get a better life through education. “I ask my classmates to wear the shirt at their work, the gym, doing errands, etc. Why? To get the attention of others, and get more support. If we don’t tell them why, the ones with the power will never hear our **demands**.”

Why is Adult Education important? Maricruz shares her story: “I came to the USA 23 years ago. My brother sent me to San Mateo Adult School less than a week after my arrival. He said to me, ‘The sooner you learn English, the better you will do in this country,’ and he was right! I studied English for six months, but then I started to work and had to quit school. Now, I am a single mother with a 19-year-old daughter. She is in her second year of college. Adult Education is important to me and other people in my situation. Thanks to San Mateo Adult School, I could raise my daughter, help with homework, and talk to her teachers, friends and their parents.”

“I can tell you too that for my child it was good that I can speak English. I have seen kids feel **ashamed** when their friends ask them why their parents need their help to talk to their teacher, principal or at the stores...What a better way than to show them that it is never too late to learn at any age.”

Maricruz is now getting her high school diploma, to finish what she left 23 years ago. “It is never too late to learn and I hope this will help my daughter to never give up,” she said.

Funding for Adult Schools

Funding for adult education in California has been an issue for a long time. While recent progress has been made, adult education leaders have said that continued political advocacy is still critical. For more information, see adulthoodeducationmatters.blogspot.com or www.a4cas.org (the website for the Alliance for California Adult Schools).

(Editor’s Note: Similar efforts to increase funding for adult education are happening in several other states and work is also being done to advocate at the federal level.)

VOCABULARY HELP*

ashamed - feeling guilt

capable - having the ability or power to do something, competence

demands - commands, what is wanted

fist - the closed hand

grassroots - located with ordinary people, not with the leaders or those in power